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ABSTRACT

The paper reviews current rehabilitation databases and discusses ways in which they may be used to enhance the rehabilitation process. Their use decreases by 80% or more the time usually needed to manually develop rehabilitation-related data. A table presents questions that can be asked in selecting a prospective database, including whether the information is accessible to persons of varying ability, interest, and experience. Ways in which such databases can be used to enhance evaluation, training programs, placement, and counseling of clients are outlined in four additonal tables. (CL)

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USING MULTIPLE DATABASES IN REHABILITATION OPERATIONS

DAVE SHAFER

ABSTRACT

Current, fully operational rehabilitation computer databases are identified and summarily profiled in this paper. Operational problems and their solutions, when enhanced by database use, are presented. Validity and reliability of database applications to solution strategies and tactics are described. Capital intensive cost feasible components of databases are identified. Utilitarian processes to access databases for operations purposes are outlined.

The harmony between computer users who are rehabilitation professionals and computers is now within reach of all rehabilitation professionals. Having assembled a talented team of top professionals, all technologically and computer literate, we have been able to manipulate multiple databases to the advantage and service of clients and staff in a large rehabilitation facility.

The opportunity to welcome technology as a way to access and manipulate information in "just in time" situations has enhanced the quality of services in evaluation, training, counseling, and placement.

The introduction of easy access to multiple data bases has given staff in all four departments a whole new set of tools for the job. Inspection of Tables 1-4 will show some of our experiences with these "tool" processes, all of which can be performed with blazing speed and accuracy by host computers located around the United States. Each database offers internal yet powerful nuances that aid in crystallizing a rehabilitation professional's thinking.

We also use ancillary computer-based assessment components that generate, interactively, fresh aptitude scores as well as other data for use in the rehabilitation process.

Each database and its components compress by 80% or more the time it takes to manually generate and format rehabilitation-related data. These databases offer efficient time management of clients cases.

These databases, used with national supporting databases like ABLEDATA which lists over 10,000 function enhancing devices,

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have shown remarkable progress in the rehabilitation process.

Information utilities like SOURCE and COMPUSERVE have rapidly expanding components that serve the rehabilitation community. For example, SOURCE has established a job network that lists 3,000 jobs in 40 occupational areas. That component is operated by 65 headhunters who never charge a fee.

How does a professional rehabilitation team decide which database meets their needs? As there are at least 60 competing databases, with more on the way, it is not an easy decision. In Table 5 some questions are presented that can be asked of a prospective database. We ask these types of questions about any database.

We access at least ten databases per client daily. All are cost feasible. We bully them to deliver information products that aid in rehabilitation process.

Rehabilitation professionals can acquire skill with these databases using a small investment in training time. For example, two days of tutorial training with the Center (or other agency) prepares staff to practice for twenty hours more; the end result is proficient use of the database. We train in the database known as Ability Information System, of Spokane, Washington. We also provide training with many other databases.

The benefits of expending two days of staff time, along with the practice time recommended, can, in the Center's opinion, stand the test of cost and program accounting.

In summary we have acquired the capability, via computer databases and related technology, to:

- Construct a composite profile of a client that contains multiple data elements useful restructurable throughout the rehabilitation process.
- Discover devices to enhance a disabled person's physical and intellectual functions.
- Generate and compare possible job titles on many points of a client's composite profile.
- Generate possible employers in a geographical area of interest to a client.
- Generate many types of data requested by any member of the rehabilitation professional direct service and support team.

Perhaps Douglas Benefield, recently killed in a test accident in the Air Force's B-1-A, points to the spirit of inquiry at our Center and NYU. He said, in the week's before his death, "We're always looking at another frontier...the edge of...technological endurance."

N.B. See Appendix A

Table 1

Using Databases to Enhance A Client's Evaluation

AIS - Using such program components as "Title" the vocational evaluator can explore truncated job titles. It is common to learn of a job not previously identified in book-based searches such as the DOT, e.g., Program Specialist-Employee Health, a high-paying job with companies like Mobil. This program is used in one phase of the evaluation program.

ABLEDATA and others - Not infrequently a client will mention a job title as his/her quest. Having obtained the physical requirements of the job from AIS, the evaluator can compare the job's requirements with the disabling condition of the client, as well as function enhancers in the over 8,000

products in ABLEDATA, Tech-Knowledge and other databases. At the same time CIS, JAN and other databases that list at-the-job modifications made by employers can offer hope to a disabled client for keeping a job title in their quest.

RehabDATA and others - Allows the evaluator to identify other agencies working on a specific problem that is being experienced by a client. Insights into the client's problem are gained by accessing this database, as well as ROME and others in the BRS collection of bases.

Table 2

Using Databases to Enhance a Client's Training Program

AIS - The variety of powerful, swiftly operating database components allow the training coordinator and faculty to enhance their perception of skills acquistion needs of the client before, during and after a training cycle.

ABLEDATA - As impediments to skill acquisition by a client occur, due to physical function limitation, this database allows staff to identify off-the-shelf devices to enhance a function.

RehabDATA (NRIC) - Allows staff to locate providers of a variety of services clients need during training. (Used with AIS)

SpecialNET - Used by staff to seek suggestions for a particular client-related problem from other practitioners.

IJB - Used by staff to identify "hot" job prospects at any of 2000 USES offices.

BRS - Staff uses a variety of its bases to obtain reliability/validity data on instruments being used. This is one of the many uses of BRS bases.

Table 3

Using Databases to Enhance a Clients's Placement

AIS - Allows identification of possible job titles in light of a disability. Allows identification of employers in a particular industry. Some actually have job openings on the day of the search. Allows multiple manipulations of data for control of many client variables in seeking best possible job titles.

ABLEDATA/JAN - Both bases allow identification of devices either carried to or already at a job site designed to enhance a physical function. Tech-Knowledge and other bases also are dedicated to the same end.

SpecialNET/CARI - Both bases offer employment possibilities. The former by showing openings, the letter by having a total client's resume and supporting materials in memory for access by subscribing companies.

IJB - While only online to USES offices with compatible equipment, it still, via fiche, provides data on jobs for which a qualified applicant was not

found for ten business days. (All 2,000 USES offices, mailed to you on the following Monday of each week-free)

Table 4

Using Databases to Enhance Client Counseling

AID - Allows counselor to search based on client INTERESTS with or without a client profile.

Allows counselor to compare a client's abilities based on work history and adjusted profile, by those required for a specific job.

ABLEDATA - Allows counselor to identify early in the counseling process:

Assistive Devices
Components for Later Assembly into custom devices

NARIC - Allows counselor to identify helping agencies for specific need in a specific location when coupled with AIS.

CARI - Allows counselor to begin client training in resume formatting.

IJB - Allows counselor to demonstrate current availability of targeted jobs in any location in 50 states. Each job shown is available for a qualified applicant.

Compuserve - Allows counselor to connect client with many other disabled persons with similar interests nationally Online at cost feasible prices.

Table 5

Characteristics of a Good Occupational Information Delivery System

1. Make the information accessible to persons of varying ability, experience and interests.
2. Provide a Means for integrating the occupational information with clients' interests, values, aptitudes, and abilities.
3. Deliver the information through various media.
4. Display and/or deliver the information in an attractive manner.
5. Provide accurate and current information, including the capacity for updating.
6. Supply local as well as national data.
7. Provide information concerning a wide variety of occupational groups.
8. Include such specific information as (a) job duties, (b) work environment, (c) hiring and training requirements, (d) terms of employment, (e) hours, (f) current labor market situation, and (g) long-range outlook.
9. Be available at a reasonable cost which would be compatible with poverty-stricken school districts and social agencies.

Appendix A

One day through the primeval wood
 a calf walked home as good calves should:
but made a trail all bent askew
 a crooked trail as calves all do.

Since then three hundred years have fled,
 and I infer the calf is dead,
but still he left behind his trail,
 and thereby hangs my moral tale.

The trail was taken up next day
 by a lone dog that passed that way:
and then a wise bellwether sheep
 pursued the trail o'er vale and steep
and drew the flock behind him, too
 as good bellwethers always do.

And from that day, o'er hill and glade,
 through these old woods a path was made
and many men wound in and out,
 and dodged and turned and bent about,
and uttered words of righteous wrath
 because 'twas such a crooked path;
but still they followed...do not laugh,
 the first migrations of that calf.

This forest path became a lane
 that bent and turned and turned again
this crooked lane became a road,
 where many a poor horse with his load
toiled on beneath the burning sun
 and traveled some three miles in one,
and thus a century and a half
 they trod the footsteps of that calf.

The years passed on in swiftness fleet;
 the road became a village street;
and this, before men were aware,
 a city's crowded thoroughfar,
and soon the central street was this
 of a renowned metropolis.

And men two centuries and half
 trod in the footsteps of that calf.
A hundred thousand men were led
 by one calf near three centuries dead,
for men are prone to go it blind
 along the calf-paths of the mind
and work away from sun to sun
 to do what other men have done
they follow in the beaten track,
 and out and in, and forth and back,

and still their devious course pursue
 to keep the path a sacred groove
along which all their lives they move,
 but how the wise old wood gods laugh
who saw the first primeval calf!
Author Unknown